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Carroll College - American Foreign Policy in the Far East

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Commencement Address at Carroll College
Helena, Montana
By Senator Mike Mansfield (D., Montana)
To be delivered 8 p.m., May 22, 1955

AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE FAR EAST

It is good to be with you young men and women of Carroll College, with your distinguished faculty and your families and friends. It is also good to be home again in Montana.

In the years ahead many of you will use those same words -- It is good to be home again -- and some of you will use them often. I say that because the world of today and tomorrow, for better or worse, is the kind of world that propels people and especially young people to distant places. It is a world of change, a world of movement.

You will find, however, that no matter where you may go, the roots are here. The reason for that will become clearer as time goes by. You will find that from these roots, from these years that have already been, years of training and experience at home, in church, in schools and college -- from these roots you draw the strength to grow in understanding. From these roots comes the background to put the vast and complex panorama of modern life into meaningful perspective. These are roots which hold fast to the enduring in what is otherwise a world of incessant and rapid change.

It is to this world, this world of the enduring and the changing that American foreign policy must be adjusted. There was a time when we could largely ignore peoples and developments beyond the Atlantic and Pacific shores of the nation. That time is past. American foreign policy is now crucial to the

preservation of freedom in this country and the world over. And the content of American foreign policy is of transcendent importance to each of us if for no other reason than that it can move us towards peace or towards war.

While foreign policy is by no means a simple thing to understand, neither is it beyond the understanding of American citizens who try to fulfill the obligations of their citizenship. Foreign policy is the course by which we attempt to provide for the safety of the nation and its institutions and to advance its total interests in the world. If it is to serve the nation in that fashion and, if it is to develop in accord with the religious and moral principles of the nation, it must be fixed in the understanding of the American people.

Now I know that you graduates have heard many lectures over the past few years. You are probably not, on this day, in a mood to tolerate another, at least not a long one. I shall not, therefore, tax your patience too heavily by attempting to review in detail American policy throughout the world.

Let me say in passing only that the prospects for peace and for liberty in Europe are brighter today than they have been for a long time. The patience of this country and other western nations has finally produced a satisfactory peace treaty with Austria after 379 previous attempts had failed because of the negativism of the Soviet Union.

Sovereignty has, at long last, been restored to Western Germany and that nation has become a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on the basis of full equality with the other western countries. All that remains in order to bring the whole of Western Europe under the protective cover of this

defensive organization is to secure the inclusion of Spain, a step which I have urged on numerous occasions in the past.

In the Middle East, the continued strife between the State of Israel and the Arab countries and the economic and political difficulties of the latter create a dangerous situation. Your government, however, is aware of the situation and is attempting to prevent a deterioration in it which might open the region to communist penetration.

Africa is beginning to press itself on the consciousness of the rest of the world. A conference of Afro-Asian nations was recently held at Bandung Indonesia. For the first time the voice of this least known but vitally important continent was raised forcefully in the councils of the nations. It is a voice that is bound to grow in strength and significance as the years go by. We in this country, particularly our younger citizens, will do well to educate themselves in an understanding of Africa so that we may establish sound relations with the nations that will inevitably emerge and grow powerful on that continent.

Latin America remains an area of primary concern to us. We are linked with the other American republics in defensive arrangements and by cultural and economic ties. Nevertheless we cannot take these relations for granted. Our failure to pay sufficient attention to them in the past has constituted a serious gap in our foreign policy which we may be able to remedy in time. As in the case of Africa much will depend on the consideration which is given to Latin America by our younger citizens.

I have taken you on a two-minute tour of two-thirds of the world in order that I might have 20 minutes for the remaining third, the Far East. That region, I know, is uppermost in the minds of Americans these days when they think of foreign policy because it is in that region that peace has been most consistently threatened in recent years. Developments in the Far Pacific and our policies with respect to them are not the sole concern of Washington.

Every state, every community and every home in the land has a stake in them because they involve the issue of war or peace. I can think of no question of greater concern to you men and women at the beginning of maturity. Your interest in this situation in Asia thousands of miles away is direct and vital. Your right to the facts in connection with it is fundamental.

Let me, then, try in the balance of my remarks to give you some background on recent developments in the Far East. When the Chinese Communists came to power on the mainland of Asia in 1949, the government of the Republic of China, under Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, moved to the island of Formosa. The United States continued to recognize his government as it has done for decades. For the past five years, military and other aid, hundreds of millions of dollars of it, has been provided to support and to sustain that government. That policy of aid has been based on the belief that if the Communists were permitted to take Formosa by aggressive force, the safety and the freedom of this country and other free nations would be seriously jeopardized. It is a policy which was instituted by President Truman and reaffirmed by President Eisenhower. It has had the continuing support of Congress. It has also had the support of both great political parties.

A few months ago President Eisenhower asked Congress to pass a resolution supporting the defense of Formosa. He believed the resolution would strengthen his hand in dealing with the crisis created by the threat of the Chinese Communists to invade the island. Congress passed the resolution by overwhelming votes in both houses. It did so, however, only after three points had been clarified. Many of us in the Senate sought to make clear in debate that the President by the resolution would not dilute his constitutional power and responsibility to command the armed forces and execute foreign policy. We also tried to make clear that Congress was not transferring to the President its sole power and responsibility to declare war. Finally, we sought to establish beyond doubt that the only purpose of the resolution was to strengthen the defense of Formosa against the Chinese Communists and to prevent further bloodshed in the Formosan Straits if that were possible.

The responsibility for keeping Formosa out of the hands of the Chinese Communists now rests squarely with the President. He is responsible to God and to the American people for what action he may or may not take in carrying out this responsibility.

I do not know whether we shall avert war or be plunged into war in the Formosan Straits. No one can make a meaningful prediction of that kind. I believe, however, I speak for all of the people in this room when I say that it is our common and our deepest hope that families shall not be separated once again by the demands of war. I believe further that it is the obligation of all and particularly those of us who are elected servants of the people to work to safeguard

this country in peace and not by war so long as peace is humanly and honorably possible.

That is why I want to go, today, a little deeper into the difficulties in which we now find ourselves in the Far East. In some ways the crisis in Formosa is a symptom rather than a cause of the difficulties. And if there is to be peace in Asia -- if there are to be long term solutions in Asia, it is to causes rather than symptoms that our attention must be directed.

The crisis in the Formosan Straits is not an isolated incident. Our difficulties in the Far East include obvious threats of Chinese communist expansion in Korea, Indochina and Formosa. They also include others that are not so obvious.

The most important of these difficulties center on Japan. That nation, as I have pointed out on many occasions, is the ultimate objective of communist expansion in Asia. Its position is precarious in the extreme. There are some 90 million Japanese living in an area smaller than Montana -- only 16 percent of which is arable. Japan has three alternatives for survival.

1. To expand trade with other free nations on a mutually beneficial basis;
2. To live on a more or less permanent subsidy from the United States;
3. To turn towards the Communist bloc in Asia not because of ideology but out of sheer economic necessity.

The attitudes of this country as well as economic circumstances in the Far East and elsewhere will determine in the near future which path Japan shall tread.

Unity among the nations of Western Europe and ourselves can be strained by differences in policy over Formosa and that is another difficulty with which we have to contend. The attitude of certain neutral states in the Far East -- countries like India, Burma, and Indonesia -- towards Communist China differs from our own and creates additional problems of foreign policy. Furthermore an outbreak of hostilities in the Formosa area could signalize the resumption of hostilities in Korea and Indochina. Finally, behind all these and other factors in the Asian situation we must reckon with the tie-in of the actions of Communist China and the policy of the Soviet Union.

The difficulties in the Far East, in short, are inter-related difficulties and action to deal with any one of them is not likely to be effective unless due regard is paid to the others. Yet in recent years, it seems to me, we have been thinking of these crises and dealing with them in a piecemeal fashion. Today the question is, what are we going to do about Formosa. Yesterday it was, what are we going to do about Indochina. And the day before, what are we going to do about Korea.

The answer almost invariably has been more millions in economic or military aid dispensed in what appears often to be a disconnected and haphazard fashion. In the last two or three years we have, I repeat, contributed hundreds of millions of dollars of economic aid to Formosa and the other free countries of Asia. And we have provided billions of dollars of arms and military equipment in an attempt to strengthen their defenses. These efforts, however, have so far failed to put a stop to the recurrent crises in the Far East. Unlike the Marshall

Plan aid which saved Europe from famine and kept alive the light of freedom, our aid appears to have been far less effective on the other side of the globe.

As a result we have exercised in the Far East in recent years a kind of chain-reaction diplomacy, a kind of crisis-foreign policy. We have jumped from the effects of one crisis to its successor. From the Korean crisis we rushed too late to Indochina to quench a fire which had spread beyond control. We have now rushed to the fire in Formosa. We may be blinded by the glare in Formosa to the fire which is being kindled in Japan or Indonesia. We have in short, never been ahead of the game.

That the crises continue to occur seems to me to be evidence that either our positive measures have been insufficient or the situation has been beyond our control. I think it is probably a little of both. There are limits to what we can do to control the flow of events in Asia, short of war and even with war.

That does not mean the answer is to pick up our marbles and go home. Asia is too important to us, to our security and to our other national interests to permit that kind of response. That would simply amount to postponing the day of reckoning. Furthermore, as Pope Pius XII said in his Christmas message in 1948:

A people threatened with unjust aggression or already its victim may not remain passively indifferent, if it would think and act as befits a Christian. All the more does the solidarity of the family of nations forbid others to behave as mere spectators, in an attitude of apathetic neutrality.

In a world as integrated as is ours today the chances are slight that we alone can continue to move forward in freedom while the rest of it, whether in Europe or Asia, slips backward into communist totalitarianism. From a practical standpoint, we would have little hope for continued advance as a free people if we cut ourselves off from the spiritual, the economic, the defensive, the cultural and the scientific relationships which we now have with other nations.

A few still cherish the notion that the United States is a self-sufficient, invulnerable fortress. They would like for the United States to turn inward in space and backward in time. We can do neither. We can only face the problems of national life in this modern world with such intelligence and courage as God has seen fit to bestow upon us.

I, for one, am convinced that we have exhausted neither our intelligence nor our courage in dealing with the situation in the Far East. The effort in the last two or three years has been confined to pouring dollars into the situation there. It has required neither great intelligence nor outstanding courage, unless it be the courage to face irate taxpayers at income-tax time.

Economic and military aid has a place in our policies in the Far East, but it is not a cure-all. It has not worked very successfully to date, yet it is the only formula that has been tried to date. It has not worked, it seems to me, because those who have operated it have overlooked one ingredient, an ingredient which does not carry a price tag and yet can be far-reaching and profound in its effect,

The missing ingredient is the human factor and it is to be found in the realm of attitudes and ideas. I think that most of us would agree that "man does not live by bread alone" and we might also add that "freedom is not preserved by weapons alone". What I am trying to suggest is that the struggle in Asia is fundamentally a struggle of ideas and attitudes, a struggle for the deeper loyalties of millions of people. And if that is the case, then it is in the spiritual as well as the military and economic arenas where the long-term solutions to our difficulties in that part of the world may possibly be found.

What I am suggesting is that we examine the Asian attitudes which give rise to many of the basic problems with which we must deal. I am suggesting, too, that we examine Asian reactions to our state of mind and our actions. Perhaps, then, we will find some of the answers to the peace we seek. Such answers will not lead to a purchased peace, or a power peace. They could, however, lead to a peace based on mutual understanding.

We have grown too accustomed to wrapping all the ills of Asia into the single package marked "militant communism". Of course this threat exists; we have seen a half billion Chinese brought under the influence of that ideology. Countless millions more are threatened with it elsewhere. We have spent blood to prevent the conquest of Korea by communist aggression. Too late, we saw Vietnam north of the 17th parallel brought within the orbit of communism. We have seen militant communist expansionism advanced not only by armies but by political penetration, by organized propaganda, by the activities of disciplined cadres of intimidators and by calculated economic policy. The Communists have alternated

military threats and the allurements of trade, industrialization and cultural exchanges to capture converts to communism. In Indochina we see the Communists and their agents using blackmail, bribery and intimidation in attempting to undermine the honest government of Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem. We see the new maps of Communist China brazenly include the territory of its southern neighbors. North Korea has been placed within a stranglehold of communist control. And now, the communist sword is pointed at Formosa.

It is all too evident that militant communism is a force in Asia. But why, we may well ask ourselves, has it not met with more resistance? Why haven't Asian patriots who in great measure were stimulated by our own history interposed a more formidable bulwark to the communist advance? Some have assumed in recent years, in a cynical fashion, that merely by pouring billions of dollars into Asia, we could guide that continent toward our own precepts of democracy; some have also assumed that by arming Asian nations heavily we could prevent communist penetration. These efforts may have been necessary, but as I have already said, I do not think they have been conspicuously successful. Why is that the case?

Perhaps we may find part of the answer to that question in the experience of Indochina. As you may know, I have had occasion to visit that area in the course of official duties on several occasions in recent years.

We poured hundreds of millions of dollars in military and other aid into Indochina, into the State of Viet Nam, in an effort to help repulse the Communists. This aid failed to prevent the disastrous defeat of the French colonial

forces at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu last year. It failed to prevent the loss of northern Viet Nam to the Communists at the Geneva Conference.

Months before the defeat at Dien Bien Phu I had reported to the Senate that Viet Nam was not going to be saved by economic and military aid alone. The fundamental problem then as now was one of mobilizing the people of Viet Nam behind an independent, honest responsible government able to lead them and to serve their interests.

At the eleventh hour, when the Indochinese situation was lost almost beyond retrieving, a government of that calibre was installed in the Vietnamese capital of Saigon. It was headed by Ngo Dinh Diem, a Vietnamese patriot of deep religious conviction who had spent a good deal of time in the United States and France.

Diem faced monumental problems. The State of Viet Nam was split across the middle by the Geneva agreement. The Communists had fastened a tight grip on the northern half of the country. In the south, near anarchy reigned outside the capital. Diem had to establish the authority of his government while at the same time providing food, shelter and a livelihood for some 700,000 refugees from the communist-held parts of the country.

When I was in Saigon last fall, refugee ships were arriving in a steady stream from the north. Most of them were American vessels; our navy was doing a magnificent job in transporting these uprooted human beings. I went aboard one of these American ships in Saigon harbor. It was carrying several thousand Vietnamese, mostly Catholics, led by their priests. They had chosen to come to

the south with nothing but the rags on their backs rather than to live under the Communists.

In his attempts to salvage the situation in Viet Nam, Ngo Dinh Diem has had the support and encouragement of the United States. At the same time, he has been opposed, not only by the Communists, but by a fantastic assortment of gangsters, racketeers, ex-river pirates, witch doctors of strange religious sects and French colonial adventurers, all of whom had terrorized and exploited the Vietnamese people for years.

These underworld forces, as I pointed out in a report to the Senate some eight months ago, were engaged in a constant conspiracy designed to sabotage the Diem government almost from the moment he took office. The conspiracy finally came into the open and staged the revolt in Saigon which you have been reading about in the papers during the last few weeks.

The conspiracy has been defeated. It has been defeated largely because there was in Ngo Dinh Diem a native non-Communist leader who had the spirit and the courage to champion the independence and the interests of his people against their oppressors. Now, for the first time, there is at least a glimmer of hope that communist totalitarianism in Viet Nam may be stopped and turned back. Now for the first time freedom has a fighting chance.

What does this experience in Indochina suggest for our policy respecting the rest of the Far East? It suggests to me that part of our difficulty has been due to an unwarranted emphasis on the material and our ignoring of the spiritual factors which move people in that part of the world.

Although the era of colonialism is almost over in Asia, its after-effects remain. There is extreme sensitivity among Asians and especially among Asian leaders about being recognized and dealt with on a basis of absolute equality. There exists most of all an ever-present sensitivity, an often unreasonable sensitivity, to any action which resembles a return of the colonial relationships of an earlier era. And force, the military force of foreign powers, is associated very closely in their minds with colonialism.

These deep-seated attitudes of Asia toward the West form a base which is readily exploited by communist propaganda. As Asians look at the West from these attitudes, and particularly as they view the United States there is a tendency for many of them to interpret present U. S. policy as a policy which emphasizes force. When irresponsible spokesmen for the government boast of our power, it undermines our dignity and our prestige. For the mightiest power on the face of the earth to flaunt its strength in this manner is readily interpreted in Asia in the light of a man who threatens to shoot his neighbor if the latter's cow comes into his pasture. The Asian, like the average American, would prefer that he keep his pistol out of sight and discuss the problem of mending the fence.

To be sure the reactions vary in different parts of Asia but I think it is correct to say that Asians in general, including the Chinese people -- in spite of recent actions stimulated by their Communist rulers -- are a peaceful people and they tend to admire the strong who are also peaceful. Much of the great respect which this country enjoyed in Asia in the past derived from that fact. President Theodore Roosevelt's admonition to "speak softly but carry a big stick" won us a

backlog of goodwill in Asia. This sensible advice seems to have been forgotten by too many of our present leaders!

Those who know the peoples of Asia and I know there are several here today who have given years of selfless service in that region, can attest to the great emphasis which they place on negotiation. A spirit of negotiation permeates their everyday life; it involves adjustments and give-and-take and prolonged discussion. Those who know Asia will also attest to the lack of the visible use of force in the everyday relations among Asians.

The constant mention of force by our leaders therefore is easily misinterpreted in the Far East. Instead of enhancing the strength of our position it has the effect of suggesting that we are incapable of coping with the situation on a plane of reason. The irony in this situation is that communism, where it is not known firsthand in Asia, is portrayed and widely accepted as a movement for peace despite the fact that its deity is force. This country which has grown to greatness on the premise of reason rather than coercion in relations among men and nations is branded in the minds of many Asians as a worshipper of force.

Communist propaganda of that kind aided by the irresponsible and boastful statements of some of our own officials negates much of the good that is done by our constructive efforts in Asia. What then should be the role of force in our policy in Asia? We know that in all realism no great power, least of all the United States, can afford at present to abandon or weaken its military power on a unilateral basis. We must continue to maintain our military defenses in the Far East. Is it not however in the interest of peace in Asia, and in our own

national interest, that we relegate force to the background? Is it not in our interest to explore any measure which offers some hope of leading to peace?

As a first step it seems to me essential that we keep clearly in mind that our national interest in the Formosan area is the defense of the islands of Formosa and the Pescadores; President Eisenhower, in submitting the Formosan resolution to Congress, stressed that point. He also made clear that he was trying to prevent further warfare in the Formosan Straits rather than to enlarge the conflict. In that objective, the President should have the full support of the people of the nation regardless of political parties.

I believe it is also essential to recognize that it is not enough to build a military wall to contain communism in the Far East. We must maintain adequate defenses there, but in the foreground our energy, our intellect and our courage should be directed toward building bridges of understanding across the chasms which separate the free nations.

It will take more than what we call military and give-away economic aid to do that. The challenge is to move into spheres of cooperation in which the common progress of all free nations becomes possible. If we are equal to that challenge, if we have the patience and understanding to stay with it, we need have no fear of the outcome of this contest between totalitarian communism and freedom -- in Asia, in Europe, or anywhere else.

I believe the President is trying to move in that direction now and in so doing he has had the encouragement and support of a preponderance of the Senate. He has many times in recent months emphasized the need of a policy of

partnership. Such a policy calls for close collaboration with other free nations based on national equality, mutual respect, tolerance of differences and free association for the pursuit of essentially common goals.

Partnership in international affairs, if it is to be successful, requires forbearance, compassion, understanding and accommodation. It is not an easy approach to foreign policy. It means give and take. If it succeeds, however, it can produce a united strength which will make each free nation impervious both to the blustering threats and the glittering allures of communist totalitarianism. Most of all it will provide an international environment in which individuals in this country and elsewhere will have an opportunity to develop and to prosper in peace.

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